



**Testimony to the CGA Environment Committee
By Louis W. Burch
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Hartford, CT**

Senators Cohen and Miner, Representative Demicco, distinguished vice chairs, ranking members and esteemed rank & file members of the CGA Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

My name is Louis Burch, Connecticut Program Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE works to empower communities and advocate for solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 234 and HB 5249:

**SB 234- AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM FOR CURBSIDE FOOD WASTE
COLLECTION USED IN ANAEROBIC DIGESTERS**

According to DEEP, roughly 500,000 tons of food is waste each year (approximately 23% of Connecticut's MSW stream)¹. Expanding options for curbside food waste collection is a good solution for reducing the amount of organic waste going into the MSW stream, which can help Connecticut make progress on meeting our 60% by 2023 MSW reduction goals and reduce the need for incineration as a waste disposal practice in our state. Additionally, by diverting food waste from the curbside trash system, Connecticut can significantly reduce contamination of recyclable materials in the MSW stream.

5.1 million Americans across 29 states already have access to curbside food-waste collection, including multiple large population centers such as New York City, Seattle, WA, San Francisco, CA and many others. There are at least 22 municipalities in the state of Massachusetts with mandatory curbside programs in place. There is no shortage of examples to draw from when creating a successful curbside food-waste collection program.

Organic waste is also a useful fuel for clean energy production through anaerobic digestion. Anaerobic digesters help promote diversity of clean energy options in our state, create job opportunities and help reduce carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. **Connecticut can significantly reduce contamination in the MSW stream, while supporting new opportunities for clean energy generation, by establishing a pilot program for food waste collection in 2019.**

¹https://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/waste_management_and_disposal/Solid_Waste_Management_Plan/CMMS_Final_2015_MSW_Characterization_Study.pdf

HB 5249- AN ACT PROHIBITING THE PURCHASE OR USE OF ARTIFICIAL TURF BY THE STATE AND MUNICIPALITIES

Crumb rubber is a term for shredded tire rubber used in manufacturing rubber surfacing, rubber mulch, and other infills commonly used on school and public playgrounds and athletic fields. This material is made from scrap tires, which are manufactured using an array of toxic chemicals, including certain heavy metals and known human carcinogens.

Several of the chemical constituents found in crumb rubber are considered chemicals of high concern to children, due to their potential to leech, off-gas, or otherwise expose children to dangerous toxins. The Empire State Consumer Project examined several samples of crumb rubber and rubber mulch as part of its 2015 Children's Products Safety Report, and identified high levels of arsenic and cadmium in that rubber, among other chemicals of concern². Arsenic and cadmium are both known human carcinogens, and have been shown to significantly increase the risk of cancer through prolonged exposure.

Despite a growing volume of science indicating that crumb rubber contains hazardous chemical compounds that carry significant human health risks, contractors and rubber surfacing manufacturers have misled lawmakers into looking the other way regarding health concerns. These industries have aggressively marketed expensive artificial turf playing fields and other surfaces made with crumb rubber to schools and municipalities for youth sports, public parks and other recreational purposes. According to the Synthetic Turf Council, there are currently more than 13,000 artificial turf fields in use across the U.S., with approximately 1,200-1,500 new installations each year.³

A 2017 report released by Environment & Human Health, Inc. examined the ways in which synthetic turf manufacturers have gone to great lengths to twist the truth; referencing real, peer-reviewed studies in statements arguing that their products are safe. In reality, many of the very studies the industry has held up in recent years actually identified numerous toxic and sometimes carcinogenic chemicals in crumb rubber.⁴

14 of the 22 studies reviewed found varying levels of lead in the fields they tested, and one of them had lead levels 500-1,000 times higher than that of other fields. These elevated lead levels alone make it impossible to characterize these materials as "safe" or "risk-free". And yet, contractors and surfacing manufacturers continue to recommend these materials for use on youth sports facilities and public playgrounds, which are primarily used by small children and adolescents.

Children are disproportionately at risk to the adverse health effects associated with these toxins due to their small size, rapidly growing bodies, and developing immune systems. While more research is needed to fully understand the impacts that long-term exposure to these materials can have on children's health, available science indicates that there is a significant cause for concern, and that the use of crumb rubber around developing children should be avoided wherever possible.

In addition to the health risks associated with crumb rubber, the high cost of such surfaces makes them an unreasonable alternative to natural grass and other surfacing options. A single artificial turf field can cost well over \$1 million- not including the costs of removal and disposal once the field has met its useful lifespan. Reports of turf fields falling into disrepair after just a few years of normal use have become common recently, calling into question the logic of investing large sums of taxpayer money into potentially hazardous artificial turf fields. A synthetic field installed at Guilford High School cost about

² http://www.synturf.org/images/EmpireStatechildrensproductssafetyreport2015_final_1_.pdf

³ https://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org/page/About_Synthetic_Turf

⁴ <http://www.ehhi.org/summary-turf.pdf>

\$1.1 million to construct, and needed to be replaced after about a year of routine play.⁵ This local example stands as proof that turf fields are not only a health hazard and liability for our communities, but they are an imprudent use of taxpayer dollars, at a time when our state and municipalities are facing billion dollar budget deficits.

In response to the emerging health and safety concerns and high costs related to crumb rubber, localities across the U.S. and around the world have taken action by prohibiting the use of recycled tire crumb:

- ✓ In 2006, the Government of Sweden banned the use of artificial turf containing crumb rubber;
- ✓ The NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation published a directive in 2008 suspending the use of rubber infill on synthetic turf fields
- ✓ In January of 2016, the Hartford City Council approved a zoning regulation prohibiting the use of artificial turf containing synthetic infill on municipal grounds and schools.
- ✓ In December of 2018, the Westport RTM passed a local ordinance prohibiting playing fields with crumb rubber.

Based on the growing body of available science and experience gained through years of observing artificial turf fields in use, CCE believes that artificial turf and playground surfacing made with crumb rubber poses an undue risk to the health of small children, and should be avoided at all costs.

CCE supports HB 5249 and recommends that the Environment Committee move forward the prohibition on installing artificial turf fields, and we urge the committee to expand the scope of this legislation to include protective playground surfacing constructed with crumb rubber.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on these important issues. We appreciate the committee's consideration and we look forward to working with you on these initiatives moving forward.

⁵ <https://www.zip06.com/news/20181231/entire-high-school-turf-field-to-be-replaced>